Report from Berlin

Two Typical Figures Interviewed: Gerhart Eisler in the East, Sen. Hertz in West, Pages 2-3.

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A Divided City In A Divided World

Berlin, March 25

To go from capitalist West Berlin to Communist East Berlin and back only costs 20 pfennigs each way on the subway or the elevated, and is as easy as going from Manhattan to Brooklyn, but this swift and unimpeded transit is deceptive. The subway or elevated rider, unlike the motorist or pedestrian who goes by way of the Brandenburger Tor, does not even have to pass a border guard. Indeed the stranger does not know whether he is getting off in West or East Berlin. The same people, the same faces, are on both sides of the border, and there is a constant coming and going among them. The huge MGM theatre on the Kurfurstendamm in West Berlin, where *Die Katze auf dem heissen Blechdach* (Cat on a Hot Tin Roof) is now playing, advertises "Ostbesucher 1:1" in huge letters. This means that MGM is offering to take East Berlin marks at 1-to-1 parity with West Marks from East Berliners buying admission tickets, a bargain rate since the West City mark is worth three and a half times the East Berlin Mark on the free market. But then the Berlin crisis has hurt the tourist business and West Berlin is glad to get East Berlin trade even at a discount. Yet though communication is easy, the cleft between them is nonetheless very real.

Light on One Side, Dark on The Other

Flying into Berlin from Bonn, looking down upon the city at night for the first time, West Berlin is festive with light, East Berlin is ill-lit and dark. The Kurfurstendamm, the shiny front West Berlin puts on to the world, is as bright with advertising signs as Broadway, and as invitingly lined with cafes and shops as the Champs Elysees. At one end one sees the dark hulk of the ruined *Gedaechtniskirche,* the Memorial Church from which the Kurfurstendamm radiates outward as the Champs Elysees does from the Etoile in Paris. A bell tolls the hours from the ruined tower. Far down toward the other end, high against the night sky is the familiar Bayer Aspirin sign in blue and under it Agfa in red; the church may have taken a beating but I. G. Farben's main products flourish again. In between, around the walls and atop the buildings along this broad avenue, the great capitalist concerns of the world proclaim their wares, here on the city border, deep within the East Zone, as if in defiance of that Communist world which stretches from the Elbe to the far Pacific. Here is Ford and GM's Opel, Ufa and MGM, Philips and Telefunken, Lufthansa and Pan Am, Esso and Veedol, Mercedes-Benz and Bosch, Siemens and Olivetti, AEG and Janssen. The great German banks and insurance companies light up the night sky with them. In the shop windows, the stroller may see the latest cars and rich furs, fine foods and fruits from all over the world, jewels and champagnes, the sausages and hams Germans love, and delicacies like asparagus at 7.50 DM a jar, or about $1.75. The window shopper is never far from the black and white display with which the giant Deutsche Bank in every few blocks supplies that day's quotations for every stock on the Berlin bourse. The capitalist who takes a *spazier* here may stop often to study and reflect on the state of his investments. The Kurfurstendamm says to the glowering east, "Look how rich capitalism is. How can you ever hope to equal this?" It is a system and an ideology that all this electric power advertises.

The East's Own Show Windows

The guide in the rubberneck bus which took us around both Berlins early Palm Sunday morning referred ironically to the Kurfurstendamm as the "Propagandastrasse." Only a block off this dazzling thoroughfare, the scenes are less impressive. There is hardly a back street without its ruins, though these are not as shocking as in the East where the tourist is introduced to the grimier back streets and to the untouched wreckage and rubble of Wilhelm's empire and Hitler's along the Wilhelmstrasse. We saw the block of waste where Hitler killed himself in his bunker. We saw the memorial garden for the Russian war dead built with the stones from his Chancellery. We saw Russian soldiers, many of whom looked like young boys just off the farm, wandering about, taking each other's pictures in front of the touching statue of Mother Russia mourning her sons; the face is the worn and tender face of an old *babushka.* We saw the tablet which says in Russian and German, "Die Heimat Wird Ihre Helden Nicht Vergessen" (the homeland will never forget her heroes). The streets of East Berlin seemed deserted, bare and unprepossessing after the Kurfurstendamm. But when another American newspaperman and I came back after lunch to look around on our own, we found the showplace streets of East Berlin, the Stalinallee and Unter den Linden, full of promenaders. Children were playing with hoops. A boom business was being done in Eskimo pies (ice cream with chocolate covering) by street vendors. The Budapest cafe was full and we found a dance building doing a rush business, a top floor with waltzes for the elderly and a lower floor for the younger set.

Better Off Than In Moscow or Warsaw

That Sunday afternoon and a prowl about East Berlin on my own next day showed how much our own propaganda has oversold us on how bad things are in East Berlin. The people look well dressed and well-fed, more so than the crowds I saw in Moscow and Warsaw three years ago. Along the Stalinallee and Unter den Linden, the Soviet world has its own propaganda show. There are rich shops with tasteful displays showing luxury goods, clothing, foodstuffs, jewelry, candies, books and toys. The Ministry of Light Industry had an Easter display that was as lovely as anything in the West.

(*Continued on Page Four*)

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An Interview With West Berlin's Economic Director, A Veteran Socialist . . .

How Do You Reunify Socialist and Communist Points of View In Germany . . .

In the two Berlins I had the privilege of interviewing two men who typify the two mentalities which clash here. Both men lived in exile in America. Both men are Jewish, a fact which in Germany makes me fearful for both of them. Both returned to important positions. One was the lifelong Communist, Gerhart Eisler, a German Old Bolshevik, now vice-president of the radio and television broadcasting service of the German Democratic Republic. The other was Dr. Paul Hertz, West Berlin's Senator, i.e. Cabinet Minister, for Economics and Credit, a Socialist since his youth. When one considers their respective backgrounds, one despairs of ever getting such men to work together. Indeed neither thinks they can, neither even pays much lip service to reunification. Eisler is a Communist who has stuck with the party through all the terrible turns and twists of party line since the early 20's; he was with the International Brigade in Spain as a kind of commissar. The last time I saw him was before the House Un-American Activities Committee a decade ago when his sister, who broke with the party in the early 20's, accused him of being a Comintern agent. He later fled America while his sentence for contempt of the committee was being appealed. He asked me to lunch at the rather dingy press club on Friedrichstrasse in East Berlin; he looked older but well, and he spoke with that assurance and lack of party line cant one encounters in Communist circles only among officials securely near the top. His wife, Hilda, who joined us for a few minutes, edits a periodical called *Magazin* which is said to be the only publication between the Elbe and the Pacific which publishes pictures of pin-up girls, a daring innovation in Soviet journalism which wins no laurels for liveliness.

A Spiritual Son of Kautsky

Hertz received me next day in his big office overlooking the lovely little park and fountain near West Berlin's old fashioned Rathaus. The Senator is a living link with the greatest days and names of German Socialism. With Karl Kautsky, he left the party to oppose the first World War. He boasts that Kautsky, who had three sons of his own, called Hertz his "fourth son." With Hilferding, Hertz helped to edit the famous Socialist organ *Freiheit*. Martov, the grand old man of Russian Social Democracy, took refuge with Hertz in Berlin after fleeing the Soviet Union. From 1919 to 1933, Hertz was a Social Democratic deputy and general secretary of the Social Democratic fraction in the Reichstag. He left in 1933 with the party executive committee which settled down for five years in Prague and then one year in Paris before the war broke out. He lived in the United States from 1939 to 1949, becoming an American citizen in 1946 and earning his living as economic adviser to a small brokerage house in New York. His two children, one of them a psychology professor at Ohio State, stayed behind when in 1949 his old friend, Mayor Ernst Reuter of Berlin, persuaded him to come back. In 1951 he became a German citizen again. He was the "Erhard" of West Berlin, the chief director of its amazing economic recovery and reconstruction since the war and the blockade. Now 71, he has an energy, forcefulness and zest that belie his years, but he has moved from the left to the right of the Socialist movement.

How They See Each Other

These two able old men see the world from extraordinarily different points of view; the conflict between their philosophies is deeper than between communist and capitalist. They share the same Marxist tradition up to the point where the Russian revolution split the Marxist movement into two wings with that deep mutual hatred only the fraternal feel for each other. These feelings have been made more intense because they are Germans, and share the peculiar German experience. For Eisler the lesson of German history between 1919 and 1933 is that the weakness of the Social Democrats was criminal, that a ruthless purge of reactionary elements, Russian style, shortly after World War I and a Bolshevik dictatorship in Germany would have nipped Hitlerism at its roots and prevented a world war. For men like Eisler, Social Democracy merely provided a facade behind which the forces of reaction were able to reconstitute themselves after the fall of the Hohenzollerns.

For men like Hertz, on the other hand, Eisler represents a force which helped to undermine the prewar Republic, which joined hands often with the Nazis in specific situations against the Social Democrats, which divided the Left until it was too late, and which turned the Socialist dream in Russia into a dictatorial horror, a kind of Red Fascism, extinguishing all liberty.

These two men share a common tendency—they see the only hope of rebuilding a decent Germany in close reliance upon a foreign power, Eisler on Russia, Hertz on America. Both, in consequence, really favor its continued division. Both are typical, the former of the East zone German mentality which tends in faithful imitation to be more rigid even than the Russians, the latter of the Berlin type of socialism — pragmatic, Americanized in its distrust of old fashioned socialist ideology, indeed rather New Dealish than socialistic, and primarily concerned with the city's defense against the East.

The Berlin Point of View

Hertz is also a Berliner. For Berliners, Berlin is not just the centre of the world; it is the world. So I was not surprised (after hints dropped to me by socialists in Bonn) at the opinions Senator Hertz expressed. Like most of the West Berlin socialists, he does not like the step-by-step plan for reunification put forward last week by the West German Socialist party. "If that plan leads to reunification at all," Senator Hertz said, "it would be the kind of reunification we saw in Poland and Czechoslovakia where the Communist party ended by swallowing up the Socialist party." Senator Hertz sees a parallel with Munich. "Weakness," Hertz said, "is not the way to peace." He says Khrushchev's purpose is to make all Germany Communist. He says the solution of the German problem depends upon a world settlement. But when I suggested that the German question in turn blocked a world settlement, creating a really vicious circle, he replied in a typically Berlin way. He said if the Allies only stood firm and insisted on their rights to access, then Berlin would grow and prosper. He pictured with pride the success already achieved. In 1950 there were 350,000 jobless and only 550,000 at work; today there are only 60,000 jobless and 900,000 at work. He spoke gratefully of U. S. counterpart funds which supplied the capital for this development and emphasized the fact that the city government had forced the private business men to whom it loaned this capital to pay interest and amortization in a normal banking way. "In 1950 we could pay for only half our imports," Senator Hertz said. "Today we can pay for 86 percent. Give us a few more years and we will wholly pay our way." The crisis has not caused a flight of capital. The Berliners were standing firm. For him, as for an ancient Greek, it was the City which counted; he spoke with satisfaction of the fact that one day he addressed the metal workers union; the next day, the Chamber of Commerce. Civic patriotism rather than ideology or class feeling was reflected in all he said.

Militarist Danger Disparaged

The Berlin point of view colored his attitude toward West German developments. In this, he resembled the dominant American point of view far more than the West German Socialist. He is not afraid of German rearmament; he thinks the German people have changed; he thinks they have learned their lesson and will never try again for world domination. "I know," he told me, "this is what the outside world fears —a Germany dominated again by the Hitler clique and of

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. . . And With Gerhart Eisler, the Old Bolshevik who Fled A U. S. Contempt Conviction

. . . After A Lifetime of Bitter Differences Over Hitler and Soviet Russia?

course we have to be careful. No member of the Berlin government ever had anything to do with the Nazis. That's not true of Federal Germany. They have some among their officers and in their courts." This was putting it more mildly than the Socialists do in Bonn; there I was told that 65 percent of the Foreign Office was staffed by Nazis—not just opportunists but convinced Nazis. In the same way, Hertz disparages the danger of anti-Semitism. "The fact is," he said, "that the Nazis have had no success whatever at the polls." Sure there was some anti-Semitism; it would take years to get rid of it all. But he and Mayor Brandt's press officer and the head of the white collar workers' union in Berlin were all Jews returned from exile; never had a single anti-Semitic word been said against them. Was this, perhaps, I asked, peculiar to Berlin? Here municipal pride broke through again and he agreed. "Berlin never gave in to Hitler," the Senator said proudly.

Berlin As A Warning Bell

I got quite a different picture on the outside of the lines in East Berlin. "We know the Germans," Eisler said. "We know what they're thinking in the West. The old military crowd is saying, 'we lost the last war because we had poor allies—the Italians and the Japanese. Now we have a good ally, the United States. This time we can win.' To let matters slide, to let the rearmament of West Germany go on, particularly in atomic weapons, is for both sides to lose all control over the situation. People like the West German Defense Minister, Strauss, will determine the course of events. We have raised the question of Berlin as a warning bell. The question of Berlin itself is easy to settle. We have no designs on West Berlin. We have no desire to conquer it or to interfere in it. We already control 99 percent of the traffic between West Germany and West Berlin. We're not going to interfere with the rest. We're not crazy. We don't want trouble. We want a peaceful life. We believe we can build a new kind of Germany here—a Germany without militarism. We're prepared to join in all kinds of international guarantees for West Berlin. Neutral troops could be stationed there, but we don't want to see occupation troops—using the city as a bridgehead for a future war. We want to get rid of the forces which right here in the middle of the German Democratic Republic exploit West Berlin for trouble-making, preparing for *Der Tag*. We want to liquidate the centers of provocative action but we're not worried about people fleeing. Many are beginning to come back. We're going to solve the refugee problem by social improvement. But don't forget that a few thousand people in West Berlin can start serious trouble; we were close to it when a mob formed at the Brandenburger Tor during the Hungarian uprising, ready to march in and storm the Soviet Embassy. If they had marched, we would have had to shoot and the consequences would have been serious. Anywhere else a demonstration is a minor matter but here it could start a world war."

Bricklayer to General Via The Underground

When I asked about the rearmament in East Germany and its social dangers, Eisler said, "We're developing a new kind of army. Our officers are carefully screened. Our commanding general and Minister of Defense, Willi Stoph, is a bricklayer by trade and was in the underground against Hitler. His second-in-command, Gen. Heinz Hoffman, fought in the International Brigade in Spain. Another General, Heinz Kessler, was a Luftwaffe flight sergeant who held up his pilot with a gun during the war and forced him to land behind the Russian lines. We're not using the old-time officers of the Free German Committee. All our officers are politically tested. Our militia groups in the factory are made up only of selected class conscious workers. We have no mass militia. We have no general conscription. It's too expensive. We need the labor."

Unlike the East German press, which greeted the new Socialist reunification plan with hostility, Eisler spoke of it as constructive but it was evident that he did not put much faith in the possibility of reunification. I asked whether he thought the Russians might agree to real reunification if Washington made large credits available for the Soviet bloc. "Not even for ten billions," Eisler said. "A new world war would cost many times more than that and a Germany reunified under Bonn would mean a new war."

A Slow Fuse

Eisler spoke with warmth and sincerity, but for all his affability and intelligence, he has the familiar Communist mentality. He really cannot understand why Socialists in the West distrust the promises of the East. The swallowing up of socialist parties seems a natural development to him; the Hungarian revolution a simple case of counter-revolution crushed. "I know," he said fiercely, "how a counter-revolution should be dealt with." Was it not difficult, I asked, to have co-existence when the Soviet bloc, by ostracizing the Yugoslavs again, dramatized their renewed belief that there was only one way—theirs—to socialism? Eisler could not see the point. Like the Russians, Eisler will admit "mistakes," but like the Russians, too, he draws few conclusions from them except within his own inflexible frame of reference. I understand the East German Communist fears of developments in West Germany—many Socialists in West Germany share them—but I also understand West German Socialist distrust of Communist promises. I see no way to get them to work together. Yet failure here in Berlin may be catastrophic for all of us. I see no immediate crisis but I see trouble later, when the East Germans are stronger and the West Germans have atomic arms. Berlin is a slow fuse which some day could detonate the world.

A Russian Play Which Proved to Be Too Much of A Hit In East Berlin

At least one Russian play made a big hit in East Berlin, indeed it was withdrawn as too popular. This was Mayakovsky's "The Turkish Bath," a satire on bureaucracy, played in the Soviet Union and produced in Berlin by a Russian director but just a little too hot for the German Communists.

The villain is a stuffy bureaucrat, who quotes Marx everywhere, including an uproarious cabaret scene. In another scene much enjoyed in East Berlin, a bookkeeper is brought before the bureaucrat on a charge of gambling with state funds.

The bureaucrat waved at a picture of Marx over his desk and said pompously, "Our great teacher never played cards." "Ah," said the bookkeeper, "but don't you remember that on page 247 of Feuerbach it is said that Marx played cards?"

"Yes, of course I know my Feuerbach," the bureaucrat replied, "but Marx never played cards for money." The bookkeeper again eruditely objected, "But Franz Mehring says Marx did play cards for money."

Again the bureaucrat did not wish to confess that he had not read the Marxist classic the bookkeeper pretended to be quoting. "But," the bureaucrat encountered, "at least Marx never played cards for money with State funds." "Ah," said the bookkeeper, "but surely you remember that famous passage in Volume III of Das Kapital . . . ?"

At this point, as described to me by an East Berliner, the bureaucrat and the audience both collapse.

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Thought Control Irksome, Party Line Heavy, But East Berliners Are Not "Slaves"

We Are In Danger of Being Blinded by Our Own Propaganda

(*Continued from Page One*)

I saw Hungarian champagnes, orange juice bottled by the China National Fruit Export Corporation, Bulgarian fruits and Russian preserves in jars. The prices were obviously beyond those of ordinary workers in the East City, but then ordinary workers in West Berlin don't buy $10 shirts or $5 ties either. Visitors from other Soviet countries were not only impressed, I was told, but even a little jealous of what the Germans were getting. By Soviet standards, Stalinallee is as striking a display of luxury as the Kurfurstendamm. A young man who attached himself to us Sunday afternoon said only police officials, higher party bureaucrats and specialists could afford these luxuries. In any society such luxury helps to solidify the ruling class, whether capitalist or bureaucratic, and to assuage the conscience and maintain the loyalty of the intellectuals. Like the rest of the Soviet world, East Germany has its own bourgeoisie.

The Pets on Both Sides

The two Germanies and the two Berlins have one thing in common—they are the pets of the occupation powers. Competition between East and West for the Germans is reflected on the Soviet side as well as on ours. Much reconstruction is under way in East Berlin. I saw many new apartment house developments for workers. The presence of West Berlin inside the German Democratic Republic, and the open frontier within the divided city, have made the East Berlin regime milder than that which exists in the East Zone beyond the closely guarded frontier around all Berlin. The East Zone regime itself has been the beneficiary of favored treatment. Just as West Germany has made a dominant place for itself in Western Europe through the Common Market, Euratom and similar agreements, so East Germany has become the most important industrial area of the Soviet world outside the Soviet Union itself. German know-how, German *Fleissigkeit* (diligence) is paying off on both sides. East Germany is the world's largest producer of soft coal, and this is being utilized as the basis for a huge chemical industry, with all this makes possible in variegated plastics and synthetics. So important is this becoming that the wasteful use of soft coal for synthetic gasoline is being tapered off and a pipeline built to bring gasoline from the Urals so the soft coal can be used for more economic purposes. Division of labor is making itself felt in the Soviet bloc and East Germany is becoming the most important source for the products of special skills. The standard of living is rising; the people are off a bread diet; I visited huge food stores well stocked with meats, fruits, fish and much frozen food—the last seems to be a Bulgarian specialty. The new economic relations which bind each part of Germany so profitably to its respective bloc make reunification less and less likely as the years go on. This is a factor as important as the political.

East Berlin Freer Than Rest of East Zone

We have been oversold on the "slavery" of East Berlin and East Germany. In the former at least people speak rather freely and critically on the streets. The chief complaint, oddly enough, is the high cost and poor quality of the coffee. Intellectually, the Iron Curtain exists. The government owned kiosks sell only Communist papers, including papers from China and Albania; no Western literature is on sale. An intellectual with whom I struck up a conversation on the street said he brought newspapers in from West Berlin regularly by hiding them inside his socks and that they were passed from hand to hand. He said things were easier in East Berlin than in the rest of the East Zone; there people were constantly under "observation." He said he worked in the theatre, that the public was bored with worker plays ("we see workers all day long, at night we want to see well-dressed people on the stage" is the public reaction) and with plays about the Russian revolution. At a theatre ticket agency nearby I saw "The Diary of Anne Frank" and Synge's "Playboy of the Western World" advertised. Thought control is real here, tempered by the presence of West Berlin so close by. The German Democratic Republic is not at all democratic but the picture of the East as "slave" is silly and dangerous. We only blind ourselves with our own oversimplifications when careful negotiation and thought are so necessary.

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